

KHAASBAAT

A PUBLICATION FOR INDIAN AMERICANS IN FLORIDA

AUGUST 2023

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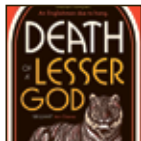
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Happy india Independence Day

Florida communities celebrating include:

TAMPA/ST. PETERSBURG/CLEARWATER

FIA of Tampa Bay will celebrate India Independence Day from 9 a.m. on Sunday, Aug. 20, at India Cultural Center, 5511 Lynn Road, Tampa. Overseeing the festivities are FIA President Kamakshi Shete and Event Chair Dr. Anu Kotha. See ad on page 7 for detailed information about the daylong activities.

SOUTH FLORIDA (FORT LAUDERDALE)

The Association of Indians in America (AIA) South Florida chapter will hold India Independence Day celebrations from 11:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday, Aug. 14, at the Broward Center for the Performing Arts, 201 S.W. Fifth Ave., Fort Lauderdale. Admission is free. On the

agenda is cultural entertainment of music and dance, Indian food and fashion. For details, email aia.sflorida@gmail.com

ORLANDO/CASSELBERRY/ALTAMONTE SPRINGS

Hindu Society of Central Florida and New Age Group will celebrate India's Independence Day in advance on Aug. 13, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. in the community hall at 1994 Lake Drive, Casselberry. Admission is free. Cultural groups and individuals are urged to participate in entertainment programs. For information, call (407) 782-3007 or email hscfcommittee2019@gmail.com

Central Florida Indian Cultural Association will celebrate Independence Day from 2 to 9 p.m. on Sunday, Aug. 19, at Cranes Roost Park, Altamonte Springs.

Continued on page 14



Continued on page 11

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**KHAAS
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Story, page 19

WHO'S WHO

Khaas Baat is a monthly publication that has been in circulation since August 2004. Issues are direct mailed to subscribers and also are available at South Asian grocery stores and restaurants. It presents exclusive, informative and relevant news about the Indian American community in Florida to its readers.

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EVENTS / SIGNIFICANT DATES

EVENTS

FOR INDEPENDENCE DAY EVENTS, SEE PAGES 1 & 14

TAMPA/ST. PETERSBURG/CLEARWATER

AUG. 8: HANUMAN CHALISA; second Tuesday of month; Vishnu Mandir Tampa, 5803 Lynn Road; 7 to 9 p.m.; for information, call Deo Gajadhar at (813) 817-9714.

AUG. 11: ELYZIUM; Telugu band performance; Mamajuana Café, 9202 Anderson Road, Tampa; 6 p.m.; for information, call (251) 895-4365.

AUG. 12: CARIBBEAN HERITAGE FOOD FESTIVAL; Shree Raam Mandir, 7411 E. Comanche Ave., Tampa; 3 to 7 p.m.; proceeds go toward Navratri celebration; for information, call Angela at (813) 842-4447.

AUG. 16: ICC SENIORS GET-TOGETHER; India Cultural Center, 5509 Lynn Road, Tampa; 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.; free seminar, lunch and entertainment; only for 65 years and older; for information, text email address along with your name to Bhikhu Nayi at (631) 560-2718 to receive details about seniors gathering every month; or call Mahesh Modha at (813) 476-1540.

AUG. 19: SITAR, TABLA AND INDIAN DANCE; presented by Shruti Foundation; sitar player Indro Roy Chowdhury, table player Shankh Lahiri and Kuchipudi dancer Kuhokee Kumari Das; 7 p.m.; 100 Mirror Lake Drive, N., St. Petersburg; \$20 per person, \$35 couple; for information, call (813) 549-9288 or visit www.shrutifoundation.org

AUG. 20: ANUBHAVA; 2023 Donor Appreciation event for AIM for SEVA; performers are choreographer/dancer Rukmini Vijayakumar and violonist/composer Ambi Subramaniam; 4:30 p.m.; USF School of Dance Theater 1, 3837 Holly Drive, Tampa; for information, call (732) 485-3410.

AUG. 26: ONAM CELEBRATIONS; organized by Malayalee Association of Central Florida/Tampa (MACF); 11: a.m., Sacred Heart Knanaya Catholic Community Center, 2620 Washington Road, Valrico; for information, call (813) 461-6747 or email macfevents@gmail.com

AUG. 16: PARSI NEW YEAR
AUG. 20-31: ONAM
AUG. 30: RAKSHA BANDHAN

SEPT. 8-9: RAAS-RANG BY BHOOMI TRIVEDI; Florida State Fairgrounds, 4800 U.S. 301, Tampa; \$30 per person; for information, call Vrund Vyas at (416) 438-1069; for sponsorship/vendors, call Mina CJ Patel at (813) 842-1647.

SEPT. 10: AKSHAYA PATRA WEST FLORIDA GALA; 5:30 p.m.; India Cultural Center, 5511 Lynn Road, Tampa; for information, call Dr. Snehal Parikh at (941) 518-6298 or visit www.apusa.org

SEPT. 23: "HINDU WHODUNNIT? MYSTERY GAME AND 20TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION"; Hindu American Foundation's annual gala; 6 to 9:30 p.m.; India Cultural Center, 5511 Lynn Road, Tampa; for information, visit www.myhaf.org/tampagala

ORLANDO/CASSELBERRY
AUG. 26: 13TH ANNUAL ASHOKA AWARDS GALA; organized by Indian American Chamber of Commerce; 6 p.m.; single ticket starts at \$200 for members, \$250 non-members; cocktail reception, Indian fusion dinner, entertainment, guest speakers; Gaylord Palms Resort & Convention Center, 6000 W. Osceola Pkwy, Kissimmee; for information, call (407) 391-5151 or visit <https://iaccorlando.com/>

OCALA
AUG. 26: CHUTNEY FEVER; organized by Bollywood Fashion of Ocala; performances by Ravi B, Nisha B, Omardath Maraj; 7 p.m. to 1 a.m.; Indian Association Cultural Center, 2030 N.E. 36th Ave., Ocala; \$50 per person; for information, (917) 607-5525.

SOUTH FLORIDA (DAVIE)
AUG. 27: RAKSHABANDHAN/BOWLING PARTY; Sparez Bowling, 5325 S. University Drive, Davie; 3 to 5:30 p.m.; for information, call (954) 543-1539 or visit www.irccflorida.org

Disclaimer: Event details are subject to change. Please check with local organizers. Event submissions are free, e-mail information to editor@khaasbaat.com by the 20th.

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Tuesday Aug 1st, (6:30 pm to 8 pm) Adhik purnima satyanarayan sahasranama puja	EVERY MONDAY - 6:30 PM • SHIV ABHISHEK AND PUJA
Friday 11th Aug, (7pm -7:30 pm) Sunday 27th AUG at 6pm Ekadashi puja	EVERY TUESDAY - 7:00 PM • SUNDARKAND • HANUMAM KATHA
Sunday 13th Aug, (6:30 pm to 8 pm) Adhik prodsh vara puja	EVERY THURSDAY - 7:00 PM • SAI BABA SATSANG • MAHA PRASAD
Sunday 20th AUG (5PM - 6PM) JHULAY LAAL Bhajan	Rajji Ramesh, Temple Manager 813-990-9175
Monday 21st, AUG (6 pm to 8 pm) Nag panchami Shiv puja for remove all naga dosha	Pandit Manikya Sharma 813-484-9568
Sat aug 26 AUG, (6 pm to 7:30 pm) Jagannth Bhajan	Pandit Rushi Vyas 813-503-3388
SUNDAY 27th Aug, (5 pm to 7:30 pm) MATA DI CHOWKI	Pandit Pranav Bhatt 813-720-1460
30th wed at 7pm - 8pm Shravan purnima satyanarayan puja	

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LIFESTYLE MEDICINE – VII: THE IMPORTANCE OF MINDFULNESS MEDITATION

By **DR. M. P. RAVINDRA NATHAN, MD, FACC, FACP**



Our mind and body are closely related. The old saying, “What the mind wants, the body will do,” is very true. What this means is mind and body are the two main constituents of your being. Always remember, your mind is the gateway to the outside world. So, it’s important to have a strong, steady and peaceful mind. A simple aspect of this is when you have to do a job, pleasant or unpleasant, it’s your mind that decides what to make of it – easy or difficult – and then give order to the body. And what gives you a strong and steady mind that will help you handle all difficult situations and live your

life happily? It is meditation.

“Meditation is a conscious effort to change how the mind works,” said Lord Buddha, the original proponent of this discipline. The main purpose is to keep your mind steady, strong, relaxed and peaceful. Then you can think better, act properly, lessen reactivity to unpleasant situations, increase productivity and improve creativity. Our ancient sages and saints spent a lot of time in meditation to keep the mind calm and in control of their emotions.

We live in a world full of stress and, this mental stress can lead to several diseases and even cause an early death. However, your mind can modify your response to stress and make it easy to handle. There are so many decisions that you have to make in life and those good choices you take are the ones that benefit you and make your life happy. In order to make those good decisions, you need a calm and quiet mind with the ability to think and act properly. Meditation can navigate you away from stresses eroding into your health.

What is the neuroscience of meditation? Many studies have demonstrated “the benefits of meditation, both for self-reported stress and also for biomarkers of stress, like measured amount of cortisol in blood as well as signs of inflammation in the body.” In one clinical study of people undergoing ‘Mindfulness-based Meditation and Stress Reduction,’ the people in the meditation group had more gray matter in several regions of the brain after just eight weeks of practice! The grey matter enables you to control memory, emotions and movement. It’s important for your cognitive functioning.

Although there are different types of meditation – it is found in all cultures and religions – like Mindfulness Meditation, Heartfulness Meditation, Transcendental Meditation, Zen Meditation etc., the underlying principle is the same.

You can learn the basics of meditation in a few minutes. Sit in a comfortable position or sukhasana, straighten your back, feel your breath, close your eyes and control your wandering mind purposely, bringing your attention to the present-moment experience without judgment. You can concentrate on an image if it helps you – image of a person you love or think of a feeling like peace or harmony, that can help you with mind control, and just meditate for 15 or 20 minutes or whatever time you have allotted. For beginners, it will be good to get a teacher to guide through the process. Meditation is simple in concept but to master it you have to do it regularly. As Dean Ornish says, “It’s the process of meditation that makes it so beneficial, not how well you perform. This attitude of paying attention can help transform everything you do into a meditation. Whatever we do with concentration and awareness becomes meditation.” My yoga/meditation Guru, Amrit Desai, calls this ‘meditation in motion.’ As one author puts it, “Meditation in Motion is a way of practicing being present in the moment by being in our body, wherever it is and whatever it is we are doing.” Then you can concentrate on the job, give it all your attention and get the best results.

Every morning, I sit in the prayer room, close my eyes, concentrate on the image of my late parents who were my ‘visible Gods’ and pay attention to my breathing. I start the session by chanting “Om” and mentally repeat the mantra. Once I finish my 15 minutes, I feel relaxed and ready to face the world. Meditation can make you a better person by helping you to cultivate inner peace and self-awareness, ability to focus and take responsibility for actions. That is why many famous personalities like the legendary computer icon Steve Jobs turned to meditation for success.

To be continued ...

M.P. Ravindra Nathan, M.D., is a cardiologist and Emeritus Editor of AAPI Journal. For further reading, “Second Chance - A Sister’s Act of Love” by Dr. Nathan from Outskirts Press, can be found at www.amazon.com



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TRACK- AND ROAD-WORTHY M2 IS A FEISTY DRIVE!

Test-drive stories by NITISH S. RELE motoringtampabay@gmail.com

This one will be a good fit on the track! Then, perhaps it can cruise the highway too! That's right, the BMW M2 high-performance sport coupe is road and track worthy! The Bimmer is super-fast: 0 to 60 in 4.1 seconds with top speed of 155 mph! For 2023, the German carmaker has boosted the length by 4.1, width by 1.3, wheelbase by 2.1 and the speedster is 0.3 inches lower than its predecessor.

Power is derived from a 3.0-liter twin-power turbo inline-6 cylinder gas engine that blasts off 453 horsepower @ 6250 rpm and 406 pounds-feet of torque @ 5870 rpm. It is mated to a 6-speed manual or a flawless 8-speed auto gearbox, which is even more fun with moves via the steering paddle shifters. The standard adaptive M suspension is specially tuned to enhance nimbleness and poise when pushing pedal to the metal. Active M Differential distributes drive torque evenly to the rear axle for more control and stability. You can personalize settings for engine, chassis, steering and braking as per your taste, style, liking! Furthermore, the M traction control has a 10-point choice! And the M Servotronic electric power steering with variable sport conveys a solid and communicative feel, keeping the M2 straight and watchful at sharp turns and curves.

Up front, it's got the look, the horizontal one! Portraying a long hood with short overhangs, the wide, frameless twin-kidney grille is encircled by contoured LED headlights while M sport brakes, blue (or red) calipers and the M logo grab attention. As do the M double-spoke light alloy wheels in jet-black trim. Step into the well-appointed cabin and there are only oohs ... and more aahs ... for this incredibly energetic ride. BMW's new iDrive 8 operating system is a huge, curved one-piece display of a 14.9-inch



M2

Tires: P275/35ZR19 front; 285/30ZR20 rear
Wheelbase: 108.1 inches
Length: 180.3 inches
Width: 74.3 inches
Height: 55.2 inches
Fuel capacity: 13.7 gallons
Mileage: 18 city, 23 highway
Weight: 3,814 pounds
Base price: \$62,200
Price as tested: \$69,695
Web site: www.bmw.com

infotainment touchscreen and a 12.3-inch digital gauge cluster for the driver. Forget the ancient analog devices once and for all as high-tech is now space-age! Go for the lighter carbon roof (\$2,600 extra) instead of the moon roof. Further adding to the rich ambiance are touches of optional carbon fiber trim and anthracite headliner. Red accents for the M buttons on the robust three-spoke leather steering wheel and gear selector are a standout too. Other niceties include dual-zone auto a/c, power front heated black Vernasca leather seats with M logo on the headrest and a 40/20/40 rear seat.

Looking for some vim and vigor in a rear-wheel-drive car? Then the M2 fits the bill. It's German engineering at the finest. And fastest. OK, not Bugatti speed! And every once, if you can, take the quick machine on the racetrack for a spirited spin!

PERFORMANCE-DRIVEN AUDI S6 IS A THRILL OF A RIDE!

It's sporty, stylish and luxurious. To top it all, the 2023 S6 also comes with the renowned quattro all-wheel drive that provides peace of mind in any road/weather condition. One cannot ask for a more graceful and energetic ride in the luxury midsize sedan segment than this Audi. Lest we forget, the S6 is performance-driven too!

The 2.9-liter bi-turbo V-6 engine cranks out 444 horsepower and 443 pounds-feet of torque. This allows the sprightly sedan to accelerate to 60 mph in just 4.4 seconds, a major feat for a 4,486-pound vehicle. To fight turbo lag, it is equipped with 48-volt electric mild-hybrid capabilities, helpful during stop and go or while cruising the highway. An 8-speed Tiptronic automatic transmission results in a quiet and smooth drive train. An electronically controlled, adaptive air suspension system delivers admirable poise and stability. The potent brakes, which feature 15.8-inch front and 13.8-inch rear ventilated discs, have a firm pedal feel. They operate inside 21-inch V-spoke design wheels shod with 245/35 tires.

The aluminum-alloy structure-based S6 sports a massive double-slat single-frame grille with the familiar four Audi rings, which are flanked by matrix-design LED headlights. The rear gets four S-specific tail pipes and diffuser inlay in black chrome matte. The cabin is packed with all the luxury accoutrements expected in a ride of this class. A pleasing 12.3-inch digital instrument Cluster matches up well with dual black-gloss touch screens, a 10.1-inch upper display for navigation, radio and telephone controls while the 8.6-inch lower one is solely for climate control and vehicle settings.



S6 (PREMIUM PLUS)

Wheelbase: 115.3 inches
Length: 195 inches
Height: 56.9 inches
Width: 83.1 inches
Fuel capacity: 19.3 gallons
City: 19 mpg
Highway: 26 mpg
Base price: \$73,700
Price as tested: \$91,165
Web site: www.audiusa.com

Offering a solid grip is the splendid and inimitable yacht-like shifter knob. Rear-seat passengers will enjoy abundant headroom and legroom. Our favorite was the red stitching on the Valcona black leather seats, a sight to behold! Also standard are a three-spoke power tilt/telescopic steering column, 12-way heated power front seats, rear manual sun shades, four-zone auto a/c, open/close power trunk, glossy piano black trim, Bang & Olufsen sound system with 16 speakers and a Audi Drive Select so the driver can pick dynamic, comfort, auto or individual modes. Undoubtedly, the performance-oriented S6 is a blast to drive. Plus, it's got the looks, exterior and interior, that should appeal to any potential luxury midsize sedan buyer. We expect this Audi to continue to give the competition (Mercedes and BMW, are you listening?) sleepless nights.

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Patriotic Dress Competition
11:00 AM - Noon
Uma Setty, Adhitya Srinivasan, Smita Prabhu
FIA_TPA_FancyDress@googlegroups.com

Flag Hosting
1:00 PM
Special Guest: Kathy Castor, Congresswoman, US Representative, 14th District of Florida

Cultural programs
02:30 PM - 06:00 PM
Alamelu Prasanna, Manasa Raghavendra, Wamikka Duzianthan, Jyoshni Ram, Krishna Chandran
FIA_TPA_Cultural@googlegroups.com

HS Graduate Recognition
Dr. Madhavi Sekharam, Sampath Narayanan
fiayouthtampa@gmail.com

Spirit of Freedom Blood Drive
10:15 AM to 06:00 PM at ICC Hall, Taaza Mart and House of Spices, Ramesh & Sriharshith Pusala
FIA_TPA_Wellness@googlegroups.com

Chess & Student Panel
Refer individual flyer for Date & Time
Sampath Narayanan, Dr. Ajit Mujumdar, Abhay Vaswani, Dr. Anu Kotha
fiayouthtampa@gmail.com

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Exhibits by Member Organizations
Member Organizations/Diaspora's Scientific or Recent Contributions to Humanity
Jay Chandran, Adhitya Srinivasan
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THE SUPREME COURT TAKES 'AFFIRMATIVE' ACTION

By **ROBERT A.G. LEVINE**



Affirmative action is dead, at least in terms of university admissions.

Or is it?

In *Students for Fair Admissions, Inc. vs. President and Fellows of Harvard College*, the Supreme Court of the United States rejected the admissions practices of both Harvard and the University of North Carolina. In so doing, the Court sent strong signals about all affirmative action policies, essentially saying that after 50 years, policies which promote inequality as a way to pursue equality have lost their value (or at least their shield from the Equal Protection Clause).

But as I predicted in my December 2022 article published right here in *Khaas Baat*, I do not think this decision will change admissions significantly. Colleges may make de jure (official) changes, but don't expect much to change de facto (in practice).

As you may know, I have been a lawyer since 1986 – most prominently as a litigator with an appellate specialty – so I've seen a thing or two from courts and judges. As my primary profession is now educational consulting, I read and scrutinized all of the Fair Admissions opinions, over 200 pages of them.

So why might this be much ado about nothing?

Let's start at the beginning. In the second paragraph of the Syllabus (a short explanation of the full majority Opinion), Justice Roberts aptly explains the Harvard method of holistic evaluation, noting five factors that lead to an overall numeric grade. He then explains the "lop" process that has been employed by Harvard, where other factors – including race – are reviewed to ensure the kind of diverse, balanced class that Harvard desires. Although the discussion is not fully complete, it is a good explanation that is worthy of your attention.

In the middle of the Syllabus, Roberts makes legal arguments justifying the stance that affirmative action can no longer be sheltered from the Equal Protection Clause of the U.S. Constitution. Although these arguments appear appropriate on their face, in my opinion, they are merely ends-based justifications for a goal that the majority of the Court wanted to reach. To be fair, this is also true of the arguments made by Justices Sotomayor and Jackson; they too are ends-based.

In the last paragraph of the Syllabus, we find the exception that swallows the rule. After holding that the Harvard and UNC admissions methodologies "lack sufficiently focused and measurable objectives," the following statement is made:

"At the same time, nothing prohibits universities from considering an applicant's discussion of how race affected the applicant's life, so long as that discussion is concretely tied to a quality of character or unique ability that the particular applicant can contribute to the university."

Stated another way, universities may consider race in the context of past performance that predicts future contribution to the college community. "Merit" is not limited to grades and test scores.

That is precisely what the holistic admissions process has always done!

To be sure, there will be some changes. Internally, admissions offices will change their forms and processes to mimic what the Supreme Court has pronounced as being perfectly appropriate. The Common Application, among others, may change its format, perhaps in its Writing section (as it did by adding a Covid question a few years ago). Also, don't be surprised to see disgruntled admissions workers file whistleblower lawsuits against their former universities in an effort to obtain money.

I hope that the *Students for Fair Admissions* plaintiffs think that Asian-Americans – who are already overrepresented at top colleges as contrasted with the overall U.S. demographic – won a great victory with the Supreme Court's decision. At most colleges, Asian-Americans are already "over-represented" in comparison to the overall U.S. demographic. While our 2020 census indicates that Asian-Americans make up roughly 6 percent of our U.S. population, the Harvard class of 2027 is 29.9 percent Asian-American. Stanford's class of 2027 was reported as 26 percent Asian-American. MIT is 40 percent. That's right: at America's top universities, Asian-Americans are already admitted at five times their U.S. demographic. And that does not include international students.

Note that for white applicants, although the U.S. population was 64.1 percent in 2020, at Harvard the class of 2027 is only 40.8 percent white. Stanford's class is only 26 percent white. And MIT is only 38 percent white. That's right: there are more Asian-Americans than whites at MIT. But that's a good thing, at least in my opinion. Our colleges should pursue diversity as part of a healthy, holistic education.

Again, the Supreme Court's decision probably won't make a difference to you or to anyone you know. Basically, it's still "business as usual." Our advice? Be awesome and effectively demonstrate your value in your application.

Robert Levine is the founder and CEO of University Consultants of America, an independent educational consultancy assisting students around the world with applications to colleges, universities and graduate schools. For more information, call University Consultants of America, Inc. at 1-800-465-5890 or visit www.universitycoa.com

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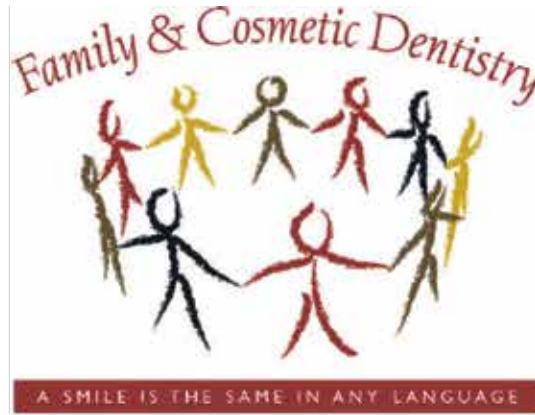
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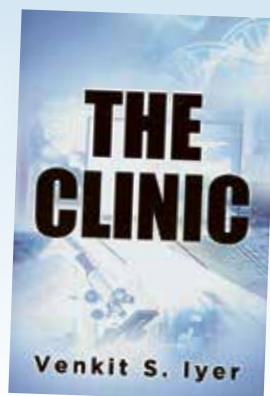
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by Venkit S. Iyer, MD, MS, FACS, FRCS-C



Dr. Venkit S. Iyer

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F L O R I D A N E W S



**5TH ANNUAL MULTINATIONAL EVENT,
HINDU MATRIMONIAL USA, SEPT. 29-30
IN SAN JOSE, CA**

Story provided by HMUSA

After four successful years in Florida, the fifth annual matrimonial event is set to take place in California for the first time. Hindu, Jain and Sikh singles can participate Sept. 29-30 in San Jose, Calif.

Prospective brides and grooms can forget online matrimonial sites full of promises and fake fronts. Hindu Matrimonial USA (HMUSA) provides a fun-filled weekend of activities and opportunities to find that perfect person, face-to-face! Each year, the feedback has been positive, and participants find it to be a unique experience and look forward to coming back if they are still single.

The idea was conceived by Devyani and Nainan Desai and Malti Pandya back in 2018. Through the support of over 30 volunteers, the group has brought the concept to fruition and is now backed by Mt. Kailash Foundation, a charitable 501(c)3 organization. "In previous events, participants came from Canada, the U.K., and nearly all states of the United States. The right life partner may not be in the neighborhood!" said Nainan Desai.

"The goal is to make finding a life partner more personal than the current online or app-based forums which are repetitive, distant, and often behind a computer screen," says organizer Malti Pandya. Unlike comparable happenings that have come before it, Hindu Matrimonial is open to all Hindus, Jains, and Sikhs regardless of caste, language or regional background. Single men and women are encouraged to register to meet each other and swipe right in person. The benefits of an event like this are endless but mainly, participants can meet in person and understand their personalities better, says Pandya.

"This allows for a better first impression and true connections. Having been to similar events, I can honestly say that I am more excited for HMUSA because the format is different, rather than the same old speed dating. The organizing team has added a lot of unique and fun ideas, with a more modern mindset, and a proprietary app for the participants," says Pooja P, a past attendee. The HMUSA app is available to all participants once they arrive in-person and gives prospective couples ample opportunities to continue the conversation.

The two-day program starts Friday evening with a meet & greet, and a full day of activities Saturday ending with a cocktail and dance party. Venue is Napredak Hall, 770 Montague Expressway, San Jose, CA 95131.

Prior online registration is a must, walk-ins are not allowed. Registration is open to take advantage of the early bird discounts as well as earn referral bonuses. For information, call or send SMS to (650) 937-9260, email HinduMatrimonialUSA.CA@gmail.com, or visit www.HinduMatrimonial.org

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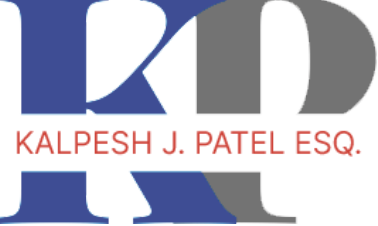
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IS YOUR COLLEGE STUDENT'S SCHOLARSHIP TAXABLE?

By TEJAL DHRUVE



May 1 is the traditional deadline for undergraduate students to commit to their college of choice, which means tuition payments are not far behind. If you are wondering if your child's scholarships are taxable, here is what you should know.

What Is a "Scholarship?"

First, it's important to understand how a scholarship is defined. Generally, a scholarship is an amount paid or allowed to a student at an educational institution for the purpose of study. It can include both merit and need-based institutional aid.

Other types of grants include need-based grants (such as Pell or state grants) and Fulbright grants. A fellowship grant is generally an amount paid or allowed to an individual for study or research.

Fulbright grants may be either scholarship/fellowship income or compensation for personal services, which is usually considered wages. If

you are a U.S. citizen recipient of a Fulbright grant, you must determine which income category your grant falls into to know how the grant is taxed for U.S. federal income tax purposes.

Tax-Free vs. Taxable

If your child receives a scholarship, a fellowship grant, or other grant, all or part of the amounts received may be tax-free if your child meets certain conditions.

Scholarships, fellowship grants and other grants are tax-free if:

- The student is a candidate for a degree at an educational institution that maintains a regular faculty and curriculum and normally has a regularly enrolled body of students in attendance at the place where it carries on its educational activities; and
- The amounts the student receives are used to pay for tuition and fees required for enrollment or attendance at the educational institution or for fees, books, supplies, and equipment required for courses at the educational institution.

However, the student must include in gross income:

- Amounts used for incidental expenses, such as room and board, travel, student health insurance and optional equipment.
- Amounts received as payments for teaching, research or other services required as a condition for receiving the scholarship or fellowship grant. However, students do not need to include in gross income any amounts received for services that are required by the National Health Service Corps Scholarship Program, the Armed Forces Health Professions Scholarship and Financial Assistance Program, or a comprehensive student work-learning-service program (as defined in section 448(e) of the Higher Education Act of 1965) operated by a work college.

Reporting a Taxable Scholarship on Your Tax Return

Generally, a student reports any portion of a scholarship, a fellowship grant, or other grants that must be included in gross income as follows:

- If filing Form 1040 or Form 1040-SR, include the taxable portion in the total amount reported on the "Wages, salaries, tips" line of the student's tax return. If the taxable amount was not reported on Form W-2, enter "SCH" along with the taxable amount in the space to the left of the "Wages, salaries, tips" line.
- If filing Form 1040-NR, report the taxable amount on the "Scholarship and fellowship grants" line.

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INDIA INDEPENDENCE DAY

Cont'd from page 1

Programs include a parade, cultural dance and kids fancy dress. Entry is free. For information, call Prashant Saoji at (321) 460-0800.

Also, University of Central Florida will hold Independence Day celebration at 4 p.m. Aug. 27 at Live Oak Event Center, 4115 Pyxis Lane, Orlando. There will be a keynote address by a representative from the Embassy of India in Washington, D.C., remarks from Provost Michael D. Johnson and a classical Indian music performance. For information, email Leila.Chacko@ucf.edu

BARTOW/PLANT CITY/LAKELAND The Bhartiya Samaj of Central Florida will celebrate Independence Day Aug. 13 with a flag ceremony/picnic from 11 a.m. at Mary Holland Park, 2015 Shumate Drive, Bartow. For tickets and more information, call Subhash Patel at (863) 838-0969 or visit www.bscfl.com

GAINESVILLE India Cultural and Education Center (ICEC) Youth Group will celebrate India's Independence Day on Aug. 19 from 4 to 8 p.m. at Little Wood Elementary School, 812 N.W. 34th St. For details, call (352) 379-2911 or visit www.icec-florida.org

NAPLES India Association of Naples will hold Independence Day celebration from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sept. 2 at a yet-to-be-determined multipurpose room in a middle school. For details, visit www.ianaples.com/

MELBOURNE/COCOA (SPACE COAST) India Association of the Space Coast will hold India Day on Aug. 19. For more information, email iascbrevard@gmail.com or visit <https://myiasc.com/>

TALLAHASSEE India Association of Tallahassee (IATLH) will hold its annual Utsav/India Day this year. But at press time, details were not available. For updates, visit www.iatlh.org



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BOOK REVIEW

Under the Cover



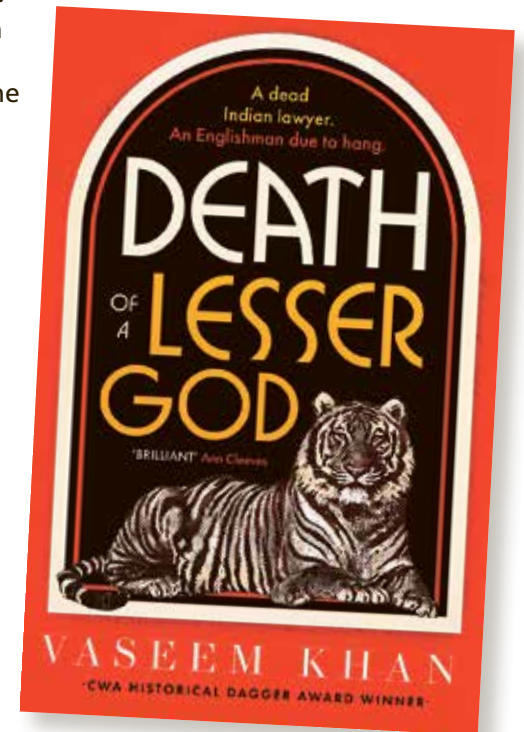
By Nitish Rele

“Death of a Lesser God” (362 pages; \$26.99) by Vaseem Khan; published by Hodder & Stoughton (www.hodder.co.uk)

First came “Midnight at Malabar House,” then “The Dying Day,” and “The Lost Man of Bombay.” The latest is another thriller “Death of a Lesser God” in which detective Persis Wadia, India’s first female police inspector, returns as part of the historical Malabar House Series. It addresses a simple question: Can post-colonial

cultures treat ex-colonizers fairly and honestly? Again set in 1950 Bombay, Englishman James Whitby has been sentenced to death for killing a prominent Indian lawyer and ex-Quit India activist. Whitby screams “reverse racism” while claiming his innocence. Just two weeks from being hanged, his father forces a new probe into the murder. Enter Inspector Wadia and Scotland Yard criminalist Archie Blackfinch and it’s off to Calcutta. Khan brings back vivid memories of the old capital: “Chevrolet taxis charged by with bearded Sikhs honking manically at the rear ends of buses; a tram clanked along, marked fore and aft by distinctive yellow circles, maudlin, sweat-sheened faces peering from the windows like caged prisoners being transported to jail; crowds frothed along the street, homeward-bound or headed towards the local restaurants for an early supper.” While attempting to expose a connection to another brutal

slaying – an African-American G.I. in 1946 – Wadia lands in the Sunderbans, domain of the Bengal tiger. “... thousands of square miles of watery jungle cut through by a tracery of river channels, the largest of which were mighty waterways. Poets – many of whom had ventured into the Sunderbans in search of inspiration – described the place as ephemeral, a land where a thousand islands, some no bigger than sandbars, flicked like desert mirages.” With barely 11 days before the hanging, Wadia and Blackfinch have their work cut out for them. Like the previous books in the Malabar House series, “Death of a Lesser God” is a gripping adventure that involves several turns and plots to keep you on the edge of every page! We cannot wait for the next in the Persis Wadia crime series from the brilliant Vaseem Khan.



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AUGUST FORECAST

By PANKAJ KOHLI



ARIES / Mesha (Fire sign, ruling planet is Mars) - (March 21-April 20) Mars Sign – Stars covered Ashwini, Bharani, Krittika (1st Part) Virtually all planets are in highly favorable houses giving a sense of invincibility. Arians are a great dominant force at work, home and society; their presence is noticed and make them a center of attraction. Self-effort of past will pay; money growth is seen too. Some may have health issues due to phlegm, bile and joint problems. Do not plan any job changes; yet do not

gamble or speculate.

TAURUS / Vrushabha (Earthen sign, ruling planet is Venus) - (April 21–May 21) Venus Sign - Stars covered Krittika (last 3 parts), Rohini, Mrigashira (first 2 parts) Planetary positions are highly promising for new ventures, domestic finances and a great month lies ahead. Avoid unnecessary arguments at home. Mental anxiety and strain can create health problems. Unsteady and wavering mind may strain relations, take control of emotions. Social influence is up, making you popular wherever you go. Do not take chances without a plan.

GEMINI / Mithuna (Air sign, ruling planet is Mercury) - (May 22–June 21) Mercury Sign - Stars covered Mrigashira (last 2 parts), Ardra & Punarvasu (first 3 parts) Mantra for success: prioritize most important issues first and then start working your way to triumph. Health-wise, take care of skin rashes, boils, bile-related troubles, etc. One can overcome obstacles, but they may prevail in some undertakings at the moment. On domestic front, take care and solve problems before they escalate. Some conflict is possible in professional circles.

CANCER / Karaka (Watery sign, ruling planet is Moon) - (June 22–July 22) Moon Sign – Stars covered Punarvasu (4th part), Pushya, Aslesha Do not get into business alliances; this may lead to unnecessary expenses and domestic tension. It is a good time for a career change. Stay away from backbiting and associating with unknown people. For some, additional income helps to increase material comforts. Meditate to free the mind from mental turbulence. This may not be the best time for job change.

LEO / Simha (Fire sign, ruling planet is Sun) - (July 23–Aug. 22) Sun Sign – Stars covered Magha, Purva Phalguni, and Uttara Phalguni (1st part) Bile-

related, eye and rheumatic problems may erupt for some. This is the right time for career-related issues. Stay away from litigation or unnecessary confrontation. Avoid issues that lead to mental anxiety and unnecessary tension. Laziness and inertia set in for some. Physical health issues, arguments without reason and unnecessary tensions mark the month.

VIRGO / Kanya (Earthen sign, ruling planet is Mercury) (Aug. 23–Sept. 22) Mercury Sign – Stars covered Uttara Phalguni (last 3 parts), Hasta, Chitra (first 2 parts) Complete all pending projects. Chance of fruitful business trip is possible. Guard against rheumatism, cold or stomach ailments. Be careful in business dealings. A transition time between selling property and buying another during this gap. Good time for career growth, promotion or job change.

LIBRA / Tula (Air sign, ruling planet is Venus) - (Sept. 23–Oct. 23) Venus Sign – Stars covered Chitra (last 2 parts), Swati, Vishakha (first 3 parts) This is not a good time to change jobs. Guard against hyperacidity, intestinal and digestion problems. No excessive drinking and no compulsive eating, watch what you eat. Keep away from gambling and speculation. Mental anxiety and stress cannot be ruled out. Meditate to free your mind from mental turbulence.

SCORPIO / Vruschika (Water sign, ruling planet is Mars) - (Oct. 24–Nov. 22) Mars Sign – Stars covered Vishakha (4th part), Anuradha, Jyestha Despite controversies, one may progress. This is a good time to complete all commercial and business ventures. Influential contacts develop proposing joint work and great partnerships. Some may face setbacks but will be quick to get up. Planetary influences indicate back problems, stomach, intestinal issues for some.

SAGITTARIUS / Dhanush (Fire sign, ruling planet is Jupiter) - (Nov. 23–Dec. 21) Jupiter Sign – Stars covered Moola, Purva Shada, Uttara Shada (first part) Domestic peace is seen, be careful with actions and spoken words, else inimical relations may prevail for some. Your words may be construed differently; be straightforward and clear in communication. Finances are on the increase, but domestic issues and happiness may get affected because of anger. Take care of hyperacidity and eye concerns.

CAPRICORN / Makara (Earthen sign, ruling planet is Saturn) - (Dec. 22–Jan. 20) Saturn Sign – Stars covered Uttara Shada (last 3 parts) Shravana, Dhanistha (first 2 parts) Arrogant behavior, overindulgence in drinking may create challenges. Health-wise, eye trouble, piles or indigestion may occur, take timely care. Currently, some may feel isolated and left out. Kapha-related issues, sinus congestion, throat, allergies, could affect some.

AQUARIUS / Kumbha (Air sign, ruling planet is Saturn) – (Jan. 21–Feb. 19) Saturn Sign - Stars covered: Dhanistha (last 2 parts) Satabhisha, Purva Bhadra Pada (1st 3 parts) Turn obstacles into opportunities! Overcome worries and anxieties, face challenges head-on. On personal and professional front, some stand to gain material benefits and comforts. It is not a good time for matrimonial or business alliances. Clear misunderstandings at office at the first opportunity. Do not procrastinate. Some may have to work hard to produce satisfactory results; better times ahead!

PISCES / Meena (Water sign, ruling planet is Jupiter) - (Feb. 20–March 20) Jupiter Sign - Stars covered: Purva Bhadra Pada (last part) Uttara Bhadra Pada, Revathi Do not go overboard with borrowing, bank drafts, debts, etc. Don't give in to anger, it may take one down. Take care of face, eye and ear troubles, try and stay away from water. Younger sibling's health can be of concern. Some may suffer from rheumatic or shooting pains, skin problems or issues related to Pitta.

For detailed horoscope analysis and chart reading, courtesy Pankaj-Astro Jyotish, call Pankaj Kohli at (905) 910-1441 or e-mail Pathofastrology@gmail.com

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F L O R I D A N E W S

SHIRDI SAI TEMPLE IN INVERNESS REOPENS WITH MAHA KUMBHABHISHEKAM CELEBRATIONS
MORE THAN 4,000 DEVOTEES VISITED OVER 5 DAYS

By **CHANDRA PATEL**

Maha Kumbhabhishekam ceremonies took place July 5-9. The Shirdi Sai Temple in Inverness had been closed for several months after lightning damaged the steeple and mandir structure.

Many months of intensive planning and teaming with experienced devotees from the Hindu Temple of Florida in Tampa left nothing to chance. A detailed five-day program was prepared.

The event was a huge undertaking that involved fundraising, ordering and receiving supplies

from India, staffing the pujaris, scheduling all the religious activities and serving three meals a day. As the ceremonies started on the first day, devotees began to come in from all parts of the state and beyond. There were daily homas, abhishekam and processions. Singing and dancing entertained the devotees.

On the final day, Brahma Kalash Abhishekam was performed on top of Shikharas of all temples, the final one being for the main temple, signifying the end of its consecration. The Maha Kumbhabhishekam at Shirdi Sai Temple was a grand and joyous occasion. The ceremony infused energy in the temple and made many devotees happy to have their beloved mandir back.

For information, visit www.shirdisaiusa.com



KHAAS BAAT COMPLETES 19 YEARS SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL NEWSPAPER

By NITISH S. RELE and SHEPHALI J. RELE

Khaas Baat celebrates another milestone this August. Nineteen years of continuous print monthly since the inaugural issue in August 2004. And toward that, all thanks go to dedicated volunteer columnists for their valuable contributions, our steadfast advertisers and well-wishers.

Over a third of newspapers in the United States have shut down in the last 15 years or so. Paper shortages and supply issues have hit community newspapers such as Khaas Baat the hardest but, despite all odds, we have continued to print on a monthly basis. Things became more challenging during the pandemic, and now we face rising inflation and mailing costs. We need your help to sustain, especially from advertisers.

Since early 2020, Khaas Baat has been available free in its entirety online at www.khaasbaat.com for the convenience of our readers. However, if you prefer a hard copy of the newspaper, consider subscribing for home delivery. And to advertisers who are looking to open new businesses, we request promoting your venture to the community through our newspaper

instead of just social media.

As activities are under way, we request community leaders and organizers to email event details to editor@khaasbaat.com by the 20th of the month for the following month's issue.

Planning an event? Consider placing an ad to promote it. Feel strongly about an issue? Send us a letter to the editor. We always welcome your story ideas and suggestions on how we can best serve our community. On that note, there is a grave need for volunteers in the Tampa area. Please read story on Guardian ad Litem on page 22.

Khaas Baat is proud to be the ONE AND ONLY Sunshine State publication to offer comprehensive coverage of news and happenings in your Florida Indian community. Do follow us on twitter @khaasbaat and join us on Facebook.



HONORING THE LATE PANDIT VISHNU SHARMA



Pandit Vishnu Sharma, a past contributor for Khaas Baat and a personal friend of ours, died June 16 in Tampa. He imparted a vast knowledge and understanding of Hinduism through sermons on Sanskrit scriptures and Bhagavat Gita. In his memory and as a tribute to a spiritual leader and adviser to the community-at-large, we reproduce a column he wrote for Khaas Baat on Raksha Bandhan, which will be celebrated on Aug. 30.

character as a widow. As more men were not returning safely from battle, their wives were losing the desire to live out their lives. As this sentiment drew stronger, the importance of survival was shifted to the unmarried sisters of the men, as the sisters were considered to be the progenitors for the continuation of the society and culture.

So, the sisters were vested with the responsibility to install the amulet of protection on their brothers, as they leave for war. It was felt that they would perform this act with the same love as the wives, as they were known as Dayaya Bhagni Murti, meaning that the sisters were the "embodiment of mercy". This was a prevalent and common act during the time of the Rajput dynasty of India. It also was felt that if the Moguls ultimately captured the sisters, they, as mothers could still influence the children's development toward the Rajput culture, though they would be fathered by Mogul blood.

Because the sisters began to perform this act, this occasion was improperly identified as Raksha Bandhan as it was somewhat synonymous with the exchange of brotherly/sisterly love between Yam and Yami on the occasion of Yam-Dvitiya, which is celebrated later in the year in conjunction with Deep-Avali. We learned in Bhagvat Puran, that Yam and Yami became separated for a long time. Upon Yam's return, his sister Yami was overjoyed to see him. She immediately served him with food and tied a Rakhee on his right wrist with the mutual promise that they would never be separated again.

This act between Yam and Yami is the correct and appropriate interpretation of the term Raksha Bandhan, meaning that for our mutual protection (raksha), we are now bonded (bandhan) together. Even though the tying of the amulet were vested with the sisters, we must remember that the original symbol of Shravani Upaakarm represents the Guru's benediction to the student, who is about to embark upon a major undertaking. That's why this day is regarded as the best day in the whole year to invest the children with the sacred thread as part of the Upanayan Sanskaar. In contrast, Raksha Bandhan is a profound act of love from a sister to a brother and a simultaneous request for harmony and understanding between them.

The reciprocal exchange of emotions between the brother (Yam) and sister (Yami) is captured in her tying the Saubhagya Sutra on his hand. We differentiate between the two occasions by understanding that in Yam-Dvitiya (Raksha Bandhan), the reason is an exclusive expression of a sister's love for her brother because of a reunion after a long absence. In Shravani Upaakarm, the reason is a sincere and profound wish for the anticipatory protection of the brother who is going on an uncertain journey, for his safe return and protection of his sister. In Yam-Dvitiya, it is a case of singular dependence whereas in Shravani Upaakarm, it is a case of mutual dependence.

SHRAVANI UPAAKARM - RAKSHA BANDHAN

By PANDIT VISHNU SHARMA

There is a synonymous relationship between the celebrations of Shravani Upaakarm and Raksha Bandhan. This article is meant to define, distinguish and add clarity between these two occasions. Among the many mythological legends of Hinduism, we learned from Nirnai-Sindhu of one such occasion where the control of the heavenly regions was won by the Asuras from the Devas.

As the lord of the heavens, Lord Indra requested advice and counsel from his preceptor, Brihaspati. When Brihaspati arrived, Indra was not home. Brihaspati then give Indra's wife (Indrani) a Rakhee (a protective amulet) with instructions to tie it on Indra's right wrist or drape it across his shoulders. This was done upon Indra's return and we learned that he was subsequently successful in his battle to regain control of the heavenly regions.

In time, this day has been identified as Shravani (August) Upaa (near) Karm (an action), meaning that the Guru will visit the student and invest upon him/her, this protective amulet, which was meant for their protection in facing their challenges of life. Since it was not practical for the Guru to visit everyone, the wives were charged with the responsibility to put this amulet on their husbands before they went into battle.

By this act, the wife was asking for victory, success and the safe return of her husband from whom she is dependent for all her protection. For those men who did not return from battle, their wives would engage in the act of Sutie (voluntary euthanasia), which was considered to be the highest form of sacrifice in the face of any potential defamation of their



ICONIC SPORTS COUPE NISSAN Z RETURNS TO ACCOLADES

Test-drive stories by NITISH S. RELE motoringtampabay@gmail.com

Yutaka Katayama may not be a household name but you can shower accolades on the late ex-president of Nissan's U.S. operations in the 1970s. After all, he was instrumental in bringing the Fairlady Z, known then as 240Z, to the American roads. And what a ride it's been for the icon, which debuted as a 2.4-liter single-overhead cam inline-6 cylinder engine with just 150 horsepower, 4-speed or 3-speed automatic transmission and 14-inch wheels in 1970.

Fifty-three years later, the seventh-gen Z may have dropped its numerical prefix but picked up plenty of power and torque to make for a sensational ride. A 3.0-liter twin-turbo V-6 engine cranks out 400 hp at 6,400 rpm and 350 pounds-feet of torque @ 5200 rpm. The rear-wheel-drive coupe is equipped with a 6-speed manual or you can opt for the 9-speed auto gearbox. A sport-tuned suspension is standard in the Performance edition we test drove. Bringing the quick car to a slowdown or stop are 14-inch front and 13.8-inch rear rotors with red-caliper finish. Normal, enhanced and sport modes are offered. And for the first time, the Z gets a launch control without wheel spin and hop for those heavy lead-footers who like to pull away for a thrill or two!

Borrowing the idea from the Japanese market's 240ZG are two half circles in the LED headlights flanking a black grille that meets up with long aluminum hood, doors and the hatchback. The lower rear stance, short



NISSAN Z (PERFORMANCE)
Tires: 255/40R19 front; 275/35R19 rear
Wheelbase: 100.4 inches
Length: 172.4 inches
Height: 51.8 inches
Width: 72.6 inches
Suspension: double wishbone aluminum front; independent multilink rear
Steering: speed-sensitive power rack-and-pinion
Weight: 3,536 pounds
Fuel capacity: 16.4 gallons
City: 18 mpg **Highway:** 24 mpg
Base price: \$49,990
Price as tested: \$53,835
Web site: www.nissanusa.com

deck and silhouette will remind onlookers of the first-gen Z. A classic touch is the three-bay gauge pod for voltmeter, boost and turbo speed. Leather and suede inserts on the firm but cushy seats look cool too. Some fine standard cabin amenities are auto a/c, push-button ignition, four-way power heated front seats, intelligent cruise control, manual tilt/telescopic steering column, 12-inch digital dash display, aluminum sport pedals, 9-inch touch screen for infotainment and a 8-speaker Bose sound system.

Even after more than five decades, the Z continues to offer awesome performance, graceful styling and great value for the money! Z enthusiasts have every right to celebrate the return of the icon with glee.

OVERLOOKED SUBARU IMPREZA RS IS A STEAL OF A DEAL

After 25 years, the RS is back, as in the enthusiast-oriented Impreza trim! Admitted, the 2024 Subaru compact hatchback has for long been under the shadow of the more-popular WRX but if you want some vim and vigor in a ride, it will keep up to your expectations. The ride demonstrates incredible nimbleness, remarkable handling and response.

Under the hood of the RS sits a 2.5-liter 4-cylinder BOXER engine putting out 182 horsepower @ 5800 rpm and 178 pounds-feet of torque @ 3700 rpm. It is coupled with a continuous variable transmission with 8-speed manual mode and option of steering wheel paddle shifters. The four-wheel independent MacPherson-type strut front and a double wishbone rear suspension soak up bumps and maintain stability in the standard and revised symmetrical all-wheel-drive ride. Borrowed from the WRX, and understandably so, is the dual-pinion electric power-assist steering, which is quick to respond at the slightest turn of the wheel.

The Impreza sports a new frameless hexagonal grille in black finish, surrounded by hawk-eye LED headlights, a raked windshield and noticeable RS doors/hatch badging. The cabin embodies a clean and simple layout with a huge 11.6-inch tablet-style touch screen (first for Impreza) to control navigation, audio and phone along with circular control knobs. Red bolsters on the black cloth seats look sporty and well-complemented by the gunmetal/carbon fiber accents on the



IMPREZA RS
Tires: 225/40R18
Wheelbase: 105.1 inches
Length: 176.2 inches
Width: 70.1 inches
Height: 58.3 inches
Weight: 3,323 pounds
Fuel capacity: 16.6 gallons
City: 26 mpg; highway, 33 mpg
Price as tested: \$31,045
Web site: www.subaru.com

dashboard. Lest we forget, the Impreza now gets wireless Android Auto and Apple CarPlay. The 60/40-

split rear-seat passengers have plenty of room to stretch their legs. Also standard are leather-wrapped steering wheel and shifter, aluminum alloy pedals, dual auto a/c, 4.2-inch instrument cluster, rear seat armrest with dual cup holders, and wireless phone charger.

Why opt for the Impreza? The reasons are endless. The car sips gas; in fact, we eked out nearly 32 mpg during our week's driving. And then there's the \$27,885 base tag, a steal considering new car prices are up the roof. Anyone looking to purchase a comfy, good-looking, fun to drive, stylish and agile compact hatch would find that the Impreza fulfills all their needs. And some more!

SLIPPING THROUGH MY FINGERS ALL THE TIME



By Anu Varma Panchal

Despite the oven-like temperatures we've been treated to these past few weeks, I went for a walk around my neighborhood the other day to get a break from my computer. As my husband and I treaded the familiar sidewalk, we passed an open garage door. Sidewalk chalk was strewn beside exuberant preschool driveway artwork. A double stroller was propped open, and a little bicycle was flung on the ground beside.

That used to be my life. A garage full of strollers and paraphernalia and hot summers spent entertaining kids with playdates and craft projects and long evenings at the neighborhood pool. Now, instead of scooters and sidewalk chalk, there's a growing pile of dorm shopping beside the piano in my living room. (Side note to fellow girl moms: you might find yourself spending twice as much as our counterparts on dorm décor and "essentials.")

As I stood outside that stranger's garage like a creepy stalker, a wave of something that felt like grief washed over me. It's been like this all year because by the end of this month, the person who made me a mother will wake up each morning in her college dorm rather than in her bedroom in our house. I can't even wrap my mind around the thought that I won't see her every day. Most days, I'm thrilled for the future that lies ahead for her, but occasionally, moments like this sneak up on me with their reminder of how much things are going to change.

Watching my oldest go through senior year was both the most fun times and the most gut-wrenching. I reveled in my ringside seat to it all, from painting parking spots and water gun wars and senior pictures to homecoming, prom, senior nights and final concerts. Although the dreaded college application process added many grey hairs to my head, I was proud to see projects come to fruition, and amazed watching kids lead, choreograph and organize fundraising projects and election campaigns and school events all by themselves.

Yet, all this happened to the beat of a tiny metronome in the backdrop of my mind, ticking the minutes past toward the inevitable end to this summer, a departure for her and a readjustment for the three of us she leaves behind. As I and all the other senior parents who have grown up together comment on each other's Facebook senior posts and graduation photos and congratulate (or commiserate) over text messages, there's this sense of a wave lifting us all up and moving us further down the shore, whether we want to move or not.

As I stand here at this crux, it's not all the wonderful adventures that we've had together that fill my mind — though there were so many. It's the things we didn't do that stress me out. As Meryl Streep sings in "Mamma Mia" to her daughter in the tearjerker "Slipping through my fingers,": What happened to the wonderful adventures? The places I had planned for us to go. Well, some of that we did but most we didn't... And why? I just don't know. I didn't actually ever teach her to cook. I didn't have all the meaningful conversations I had planned to by now. We never forced her to play a sport! I haven't shown her the Grand Canyon or Niagara Falls!

To echo what every mother writes in every angst-ridden Grown and Flown column Facebook sadistically keeps throwing at me — I thought I had more time. And yet, here we are. There's just so little of this precious commodity, and when it comes to spending time with our children, no amount will ever be enough.

I don't think it was the tricycle in the garage that got me. I don't actually want to go back in time to when my kids were toddlers and preschoolers — I love the interesting, complicated teenagers they are now. I'm excited to see all the big and small ways in which their kind, ambitious generation will change the world. I know she has the tools and the skills to thrive and I hope she has the time of her life (safely and with no lasting repercussions!).

I guess ... I'm just somewhat selfishly obsessing about my own diminishing role in her life. I guess what I envy is that mom's place beside that child on the tricycle, and the fact that she's right there, just inches away, when the kid looks up and says, "watch me!"

Anu Varma Panchal is a mother of two and owner of YourEditingSolutions.com

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\$250,000 GIFT TO HELP ESTABLISH ENDOWED CHAIR FOR THE INDIA CENTER AT UCF

By CHARLENE EBERLY

A \$250,000 gift from Port Orange, residents Ramesh Chopra and Neena Chopra will bring University of Central Florida another step closer to its goal of establishing the Indian Community Endowed Chair for The India Center.

Establishing an endowed chair highlights the importance of studying India at UCF. In Fall 2022, over 3,000 students from 149 countries enrolled at UCF. Students from India represented the second-largest group of international students with 460 individuals enrolled.

The Chopras' gift will be amplified by a \$50,000 match from the university through the UCF Challenge. This strategic initiative provides matching funding from the transformational \$40 million gift made in 2021 by philanthropist MacKenzie Scott. With the Chopra family's gift, donors to date have pledged more than \$2.5 million toward the \$5 million goal to establish the endowed chair position.

"It is our hope that our gift will help The India Center create a strong foundation for ongoing research and teaching about India, a diverse and dynamic culture that is both ancient and modern," says Ramesh Chopra.

Ramesh and Neena Chopra have both practiced medicine in Florida for over 40 years and live in Port Orange. The couple first moved to Florida in 1982 from Minneapolis, Minn. They are active in the Indian American community in Central Florida and helped establish CAPI, a network of Indian American medical professionals who fundraise and pool resources to support health and wellness initiatives, professional growth and leadership development. The couple has a son and daughter, who are both physicians, and four grandchildren.

"We are honored that the Chopra family has chosen to support The India Center at UCF," says Kerstin Hamann, interim director of The India Center, an associate dean in the College of Sciences and a Pegasus



Ramesh and Neena Chopra

Professor in the School of Politics, Security and International Affairs. "Their gift makes a significant contribution to support the work and enhance the reputation of the center as we strive to become the nation's preeminent location for the study of contemporary India."

The mission of The India Center at UCF is to broaden the awareness and understanding of India's role in the world today. The center is housed in the School of Politics, Security, and International Affairs in the College of Sciences. Established in 2012, the center hosts symposia and events of interest to the regional Indian American community and to UCF students and faculty interested in

India and its impact in Florida, the nation and beyond. The center has supported the work of UCF scholars and students in India and has received a variety of delegations from India.

The India Center at UCF develops India-U.S. partnerships among universities, companies, governmental, cultural, and other organizations to address issues and opportunities important to both India and the U.S. in areas ranging across technology, politics, security, medicine and more. UCF and The India Center have established partnerships with eight educational institutions in India for student and faculty collaborations and joint graduate degree programs with two colleges in India.

The Carnegie Endowment notes that between 2000 and 2018, the Indian American population grew by 150 percent. In Florida, Orange County is home to the state's third largest population of immigrants from India behind Hillsborough and Broward counties in 2021, according to the Migration Policy Institute.

Story reprinted with permission by UCF

CRITICAL NEED FOR VOLUNTEERS IN THE TAMPA AREA

Story provided by Guardian a Litem

As caregivers and children prepare for a new academic year with school supply shopping, it can be a happy, hectic time, a sign of normalcy. For foster children, starting a school year, perhaps in a new school or not having adequate school supplies, can be daunting, even traumatic. For a child in foster care, normalcy can look as simple as a new backpack or lunch box; healing can be seen in the positive impact on that child's self-confidence as they start the school year feeling that they belong. The Statewide Guardian ad Litem Office continues to make a meaningful impact this time of year, and the need for volunteers in our area is critical.

By bringing a backpack or school supplies to a child, the Statewide Guardian ad Litem Office brings normalcy to the back-to-school process for a child whose life has been turned upside down. The office is often the only support and constant in a foster child's life; the Guardian ad Litem Volunteer brings healing to the child's self-worth in the school environment.

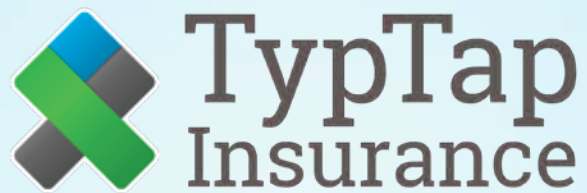
The Statewide Guardian ad Litem office volunteers show our community's children that they matter and that we care. Can you help by joining the Statewide Guardian ad Litem office child advocacy team? Although every child appointed to the Statewide Guardian ad Litem

Office is assigned a Guardian ad Litem Attorney and a child welfare professional, not every child has a volunteer on their team. This is where you can help.

National research shows that children with a Guardian ad Litem are more likely to earn better grades, enroll in post-secondary education, and learn better coping skills when aging out of foster care. Students in foster care need our help to have a successful academic school year and move forward confidently.

The Statewide Guardian ad Litem Office represents Florida's abused, abandoned and neglected children in court and the community. Through the collaboration of a national best practice multi-disciplinary team that always includes a Guardian ad Litem attorney, a child welfare professional and hopefully a trained volunteer or pro bono attorney from the child's community if one is available, the team provides legal representation while assisting the child in expressing their needs and wishes. This unique approach allows us to support the whole child, addressing their physical, educational, mental, emotional, social and legal needs. In 2022, the Statewide Guardian ad Litem Office represented over 36,000 children in Florida.

Learn how to get involved and how you can make a difference in a child's life at www.guardianadlitem.org or call (813) 272-5110.



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